

FROM PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETENCE TO PUBLIC SPEAKING CULTURE**Valentina ȘMATOV**, *Alecu Russo State University of Balti, Republic of Moldova**The wisest course of action under present circumstances is to concern ourselves less with theory and more with finding out what techniques succeed best with our students (Clifford, H.P.)*

Rezumat: În articol se analizează competențele comunicative utilizate în procesul de pregătire a discursurilor publice, a luărilor de cuvânt și în procesul discutării acestora. Articolul se bazează pe experiența de predare a cursului *Discursul public* la Facultatea de Limbi și Literaturi Străine a Universității de Stat „Alecu Russo” din Bălți. În procesul de pregătire și realizare a discursului public sunt folosite competențele lingvistice și culturale, experiența anterioară de comunicare, precum și competența strategică.

Cuvintele-cheie: *cultura discursului public, competențe comunicative, gândire critică, competență strategică.*

Abstract: The present article analyses communicative competences involved in the process of public speech preparation, its delivery, and its evaluation. It shares the experience of teaching the Course of Public Speaking at the faculty of foreign languages at Alecu Russo Balti State University. Competence – based approach to teaching public speaking at the University draws on the acquired linguistic and cultural competence, the previous public speaking experience and strategic competence.

Keywords: *public speaking culture, communicative competences, critical thinking, strategic competence*

The aim of the article is to specify the core components of communicative competence which come into play in the process of public speaking and to outline some teaching policies used in the Course of Public Speaking, leading to the formation of public speaking competence and culture.

The twenty-first century with its technological advancements, the shifting of ethnic and cultural patterns, the awareness of the ethical implications of our communicative behavior requires high standards of communicative competence. (Samovar, 2000: 5-1) Chomsky's remarkable distinction between competence and performance has developed into communicative competence and today it is understood as consisting of several components. In fact, the more competence was researched, the more competences appeared: intercultural, pragmatic, linguistic, metaphorical, discourse, strategic, sociolinguistic etc. (Bantas, 1993; Bonvillain, 1993; Brydon, 2000; Littlemore, 2006).

Analysis of different models of communicative competence (Littlemore 2006) reveals that there is no definitive model of communicative competence yet, and the relations between its components are far from being clear. There are many models of communicative competence and a number of components making up communicative competence differ from linguist to linguist because of different perspectives taken by scholars. At present, it is difficult to compare them but still it is obvious that though linguistic competence is the basic one, it alone is not enough to meet the demands of a speech situation, especially if it is a public speech situation.

Communicative competence in general and public speaking competence in particular involves psychological, sociological and pragmatic factors, which exercise their influence on the choice of verbal and non verbal means. In addition, public speaking competence may draw on stylistic, intercultural, discourse, paralinguistic, pragmatic competences, formed in the mother tongue and transferred to the foreign language. It is interesting to learn how communicative competences of the mother tongue interact with those of the foreign language in the process of public speaking.

At Alecu Russo Balti State University the Course of Public Speaking was first introduced at the faculty of foreign languages by the English Philology Chair as the continuation of studies in Stylistics, and now it is included into the master's programme of studies. The students taking the course possess communicative competence in the mother tongue and have achieved some proficiency in English; however, they have little experience in making public speeches not only in English but also in their mother tongue.

The students are highly motivated to improve their English by writing, delivering and analyzing speeches. They can rely on their previous knowledge of stylistics, discourse analysis, pragmatic conversational principles, and cultural studies. These courses are of great theoretical and practical value to public speakers. The course of public speaking is supported by numerous textbooks on public speaking, published in the USA, describing various problems and aspects in the process of speech preparation, speech delivery, and speech evaluation. They serve as the subjects for discussions and informative presentations made by the students. The Internet supplies with a great variety of theoretical and practical teaching materials dealing with public speaking culture.

The process of public speaking may be taken into several stages: speech preparation, speech delivery, speech evaluation. At the stage of speech preparation students need critical thinking competence to narrow the topic of the speech, to select ideas, to form goals and intentions, and to analyze the audience. While wri-

ting the speech, they again need critical thinking, stylistic and discourse competences most. Memorizing the speech calls for paralinguistic competence in the selection of voice, intonation, stress and body language. (Samovar, 2000: 55).

At the stage of speech delivery students apply several communicative competences simultaneously: linguistic competence, critical thinking, strategic competence etc. The simultaneity of several communicative competences makes this stage stressful. Strategic competence is central to public speaking. It includes psycholinguistic processes of self-awareness, self-presentation, self-monitoring, self-verification, self-adjustment. At the same time it is also important to manage the audience. The performance of the speech may introduce changes into the script of the speech if the speaker is flexible enough to interact with the audience. The speech may diverge from the script during its delivery.

At the stage of speech evaluation students need critical thinking competence, speech and impression analyses which require the knowledge of the rules of public speaking culture and the ability to give impromptu speeches.

In the lectures on public speaking special attention is given to the ways of dealing with anxiety, the stylistic use of the English language, paralinguistics and body language, the beginning and the ending of the speech, the problems of adapting to the audience, successful message preparation and its delivery, improvement of listening skills, types of public speeches, famous orators and their speeches, presentational aids.

The Course of Public Speaking focuses on the development of critical thinking competence, intercultural competence and ethical norms as they represent the core of public speaking culture. According to learner-centered methodology students decide on the choice of the topics to speak, the expressive means to use, the presentational aids to apply. Students of public speaking are involved in decision making, regarding the goals, the content, the presentation and the assessment of the course.

Practical classes cover the main stages of public speaking: speech preparation, speech delivery and speech evaluation. Time is given for rehearsal before making a speech in class, rules are strict: keeping time limits, speaking without papers and respecting „keep-it-short-sweet-and-simple” („kiss-s”) principle. Speeches of different types and for different social situations are practiced during the classes. Public speaking contest is a logical way to crown the studies.

Special care is taken to create the atmosphere of welcome and positive constructive criticism during the classes, encouraging self-disclosure, originality, creativity. Students evaluate the ways of being successful in public speaking. To sustain interest and motivation students are encouraged to prove that great speakers are not only born but may also be made!

It is important to note that the Course of Public Speaking contributes to the personal, social, educational development of every student and to the formation of students' public speaking competence and culture. It may be recommended to use public speaking tasks during English language classes more often, so that students may get trained in self-monitoring in mini-presentations, and in compiling different types of speeches. It may also be useful to reformulate knowledge in terms of competences in writing communicative syllabus, designing teaching materials and organizing classes. Courses of public speaking should be widely introduced at schools, colleges and university levels.

References:

1. Bantas, A. et als., *English for advanced students*, Iași, 1993.
2. Bonvillain, N., *Language, culture and communication: the meaning of messages*, Prentice Hall, 1993.
3. Brydon, S., Scott, M., *Between one and many: the art and science of public speaking*, London-Toronto, 2000.
4. Clifford, H., *In search of a method*, ELT, April, 2002.
5. Littlemore, J. and Low, G., *Metaphoric competence, second language learning and communicative language ability*. In: *Applied Linguistics* 27/2; 268-294, Oxford University Press, 2006.
6. Nation, P., *Designing and improving a language course*, English Teaching Forum, October, 2000.
7. Samovar, L., *Oral communication: Speaking across cultures*, Los Angeles, California, 2000.